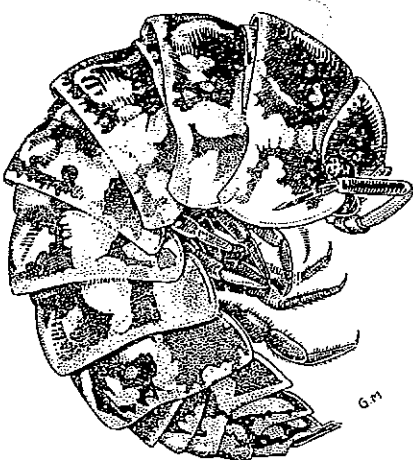


BRITISH ISOPOD STUDY GROUP

NEWSLETTER 37

Autumn 1994

Edited by David Bilton



Editorial

As you will see below, we have yet another addition to the British woodlouse fauna, this time one which was previously recorded from Ireland, namely *Oritoniscus flavus*! It's always been a mystery why this species didn't occur in Britain, and it will be interesting to see if further searching in this part of Wales can shed any light on *Oritoniscus*' status here. Another interesting recent find was *Trichoniscoides saeroeensis* in a mine on the Isle of Man. This was taken by Max Moseley, who incidentally was the first person to find the species in Britain, from mines at Warton Crag. Preparations for the new atlas (which will probably now appear in *Field Studies*) are well underway. Data entry at BRC is now complete, a task which has more than doubled our data set since Harding and Sutton's publication. At present a small band of enthusiastic BRC "volunteers" are in the process of checking the computerised data for errors, and we should see the finished product sometime next year. We are also soon to have new record cards including those species added to the list since the last ones appeared in 1982. These will also have separate categories for confirmed males in some of the trichoniscids, making filling out and interpretation easier. My paper on *Oniscus asellus* subspecies is now out (*Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society* 110: 325-354), and if anyone who can't get access to the journal wants a copy they should write to me and I can supply one.

Oritoniscus flavus, new to Britain - in Carmarthenshire, South-West Wales.

I. K. Morgan

Oritoniscus flavus (Budde-Lund) is a woodlouse hitherto only found in the Republic of Ireland with no records from mainland Britain (Harding & Sutton, 1985); it also occurs in western Europe. Harding and Sutton (loc. cit.) drew attention to its puzzling absence from Britain, terming the species a "biogeographical curiosity".

On 5th March 1994, whilst investigating the invertebrate fauna associated with various *Salix* and *Populus* in the low-lying coastal belt SE of Llanelli (VC44, SS59), the author noticed numerous purpley-brown, fast-moving woodlice in the saturated lower layers of a pile of red-rotted *Salix alba* lying in a grass-filled drainage ditch. The location of the ditch is NE of Dyffryn Farm, Bynea beside a public footpath north of the new Trostre-Yspitty A484 link road (21/548985).

It was noticeable that the woodlice occupied the lowest, wettest layer of the log pile (with for example *Oniscus asellus* much higher up in the drier parts). The area around the ditch is very low-lying (<5m) pastoral farmland, partly affected by urban growth, and is essentially

upper saltmarsh "reclaimed" in the 18th and 19th century.

Examination of the specimens at home showed that only one ocellus was present on each side of the head. Paul Harding provisionally confirmed the determination, commenting that there is the possibility that these may be another species of *Oritoniscus*, although they fit the descriptions in Vandel (1960 & 1962). [The specimens are indeed *O. flavus* on the basis of male pleopods, the same form which occurs in Ireland-Ed.]

BISG/BMG Meeting, 1995.

Next year the meeting will be in Cumbria, at the West Cumbria Field Centre, Rowrah Hall, Frizington. A booking form and details of the location are enclosed with this newsletter. This part of Cumbria has produced some interesting species in recent years (e.g. *Armadillidium album*, *Halophiloscia couchi* and possibly *Metatrichoniscoides celticus* (a female only)), and still has a lot of potential for isopods and myriapods. The fact that a number of local coastal towns used to be major ports means something out of the ordinary could turn up in the synanthropic line. The centre is also ideally situated for access to the Lake District and north Cumbria, both of which have lots of exciting habitats. Should be an enjoyable trip all round, so why not fill out the form and come along??

Further pigment variations in woodlice

P. F. Whitehead

In 1989, S. P. Hopkin (Isopoda 3: 29-31) asked the question "Albino" woodlice, do they exist? To support his answer, he was able to cite only three records, for *Oniscus asellus*, *Porcellio scaber* and *Porcellionides cingendus*. BISG Newsletters 27 (1989) and 28 (1990) have only added three further records, so albinism in woodlice is evidently relatively rare.

Some of these records however, are not strictly demonstrating albinism, which appears to require a total lack of pigment. From the description, the *P. scaber* taken in Perthshire on 25/8/1981 (Newsletter 27: 3), appears to have been xanthochroistic, so that genuine albinos would be even rarer.

I can now cite two further records of pigment variation viz:

Leucism

Porcellio spinicornis. Quarry-face, Westmancote, Worcestershire, 24/3/1992. Generally white with small faint and diffuse grey dorsal smudge. Ocelli dark brown.

Albinism

Oniscus asellus. Under *Salix* bark, Birlingham, Worcestershire, 2/2/1994. Totally white, with ocelli difficult to discern. With 120 normally pigmented specimens.

Linnean Society Woodlouse Synopsis

Synopses of the British Fauna (New Series) 49, Woodlice, by P.G. Oliver and C.J. Meehan has now appeared, and is a welcome addition to our oniscid literature. The work updates and surpasses Edney's previous volume in the series as a formal taxonomic account of the British woodlouse fauna, and as such elegantly complements Steve Hopkin's Aidgap guide.

Detailed drawings of male pleopods are included for all species, and most are accompanied by half-tone habitus figures of intact animals. Many of these are excellent, those of *Ligia*, *Ligidium* and *Cylisticus* standing out in particular. Each species account consists of a full description and some notes on distribution and habitat. Little mention is given to the existence of the recording scheme post Harding and Sutton, however, and it's a pity there are no

suggestions as to where users of the guide should send their records, since recent discoveries have shown that there is still much to learn about our isopod fauna. The only major error I've spotted concerns the descriptions of *Armadillidium pictum* and *pulchellum*, where the statements about the first pereonite (rear angle of epimeron chamfered in *pulchellum* and not in *pictum*) have been mixed up, even though the figures are the right way round. Copies can be obtained from the Field Studies Council (address at the end of this newsletter) at a price of £16.50.

BISG Meeting 1994, Meigle.

Charles Rawcliffe made an excellent job of organizing this trip, which did a good deal to fill in some gaps in recording, and also produced our most northerly record of *Armadillidium vulgare*, just across the firth from previous localities in Fife. A total of 11 species (*Androniscus dentiger*, *Armadillidium vulgare*, *Cylisticus convexus*, *Haplophthalmus mengei*, *Ligia oceanica*, *Oniscus asellus*, *Philoscia muscorum*, *Porcellio scaber*, *Porcellio spinicornis*, *Trichoniscus pusillus* and *Trichoniscus pygmaeus*) were recorded, and although records have only been sent in by two groups, I think this is the full total. Despite being bombarded by snow and sleet we totted up a fair number of sites and squares (more 10kms than species!), and in the process covered quite a large percentage of the local churchyards in search of synanthropic species. *Porcellio spinicornis* is certainly very abundant in this part of Scotland, turning up in almost 50% of sites for which records have been sent in.

***Porcellionides cingendus* in Suffolk**

Jon Daws

The spider recording scheme had a meeting at Orford Ness, Suffolk between 16th and 18th June 1994. The site has recently been purchased by the National Trust, and the information gained during the weekend will help in the formulation of management plans.

On Saturday morning a couple of *Porcellionides cingendus* were found amongst strandline debris. On showing these to Paul Lee it turned out he had already collected a specimen but not recognized it as *P. cingendus*, a species he had never previously seen. Of course a debate then ensued about who could claim the new record!

Over the two days *P. cingendus* turned out to be quite abundant in a variety of habitats such as strandline, reedbed, grassland and around disused buildings. The other interesting species encountered was *Armadillidium nasatum*, from dry reed litter and periodically flooded sea-couch grassland.

Congratulations and get well cards can be sent to Paul Lee, c/o Suffolk General Hospital, Ipswich, Suffolk.....

Linn. Soc. Keys

Steve Tilling of the Field Studies Council has informed me that the Council has acquired all Brill's stock of previously published Linnean Society *Synopses* (17 volumes including *Harvestmen*, *Pseudoscorpions* and *Millipedes*), and are now offering these at a reduced price (approx. 33% off). This is obviously to be welcomed, and now that the FSC is in charge of publication of future *Synopses* they should remain more affordable.

Addresses

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